

WILLIAM A. LITTLE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
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**INTERVIEWERS:** WILLIAM LITTLE

**SUBJECTS:** UNITED CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ASSOCIATION; TYREE SCOTT; BLACK CONSTRUCTION WORKERS; ASIAN AMERICAN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS; WORKERS OF COLOR; COURT ORDER ADVISORY COMMITTEE; OPERATING ENGINEERS; CHINESE AMERICANS; JUNE 1ST MOVEMENT; APPRENTICES; RACISM; ALASKA CANNERY WORKERS ASSOCIATION; CANNERY WORKERS; EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION; STRATEGY; TITLE VII; LAWSUITS; JAIL; ARRESTS; COURTS; CONSENT DECREE; NATIONAL CONSTRUCTION; SHUTDOWNS; ASIAN COMMUNITY; BLACK COMMUNITY; CHINESE COMMUNITY; CHINATOWN; INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT; COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

**LOCATION:** SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

**DATE:** NOVEMBER 3, 1975

**INTERVIEW LENGTH:** 00:48:45

**FILE NAME:** WooMichael\_WLOHP\_1975\_Audio\_acc2610-003.mp3

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[00:00:00] **WILLIAM:** ...How do you become involved, the types of—how you participate, your role in the organization, the significance of your involvement, the external community given the Asian community, the Black community, the Chicano community, and the Native American community in terms of the relationship between the court order which only really relates to Blacks and doesn't relate to any other ethnic group in terms of court order, was handed down to decree, only relates to Blacks in the craft unions and the types of problems that that contributes to you as an individual working in this organization in terms of how you deal with that

community like that, because then you deal with practical things, not in terms of theoretical. In theoretical you can have one ideology or one theory, but in terms of the reality and how does the community react, based on these types of contradictions.

[00:01:04] **MICHAEL:** Well, my work experience before I even came to the UCWA [United Construction Workers Association], it was like traditional kinds of—you know, Chinese brought up in this country. What I did was I worked in restaurants and service stations and like limited skill kind of labor positions. And prior to coming into the UCWA I worked for about three years at the Seattle-Tacoma Airport and I was working for flight service. What they did was to work for non-scheduled carriers. And I was working my way up, I became a foreman, and I ran the group pretty well.

When it came time for us to figure out because we were doing non-scheduled carriers, we were non-union, and we had rubbed shoulders all the time with airline employees who would boast about their union and all the kinds of benefits they received, got us interested in the union itself. So we started talking to organizers from the Teamsters. And eventually myself and a couple other people, we played a role in getting signature cards so that we could have the election. Ultimately, the election was won, and we had the Teamsters union brought in. The election took place right in the fall of 1971. And it was a slow period for us at that point, so I got laid off from my job and subsequently never got re-hired. I tried to tie it back into the type of foreman that I was. It was pretty much like a lot of the stuff around the union elections. And inevitably, if I had stayed there I would have learned a lesson about unions, probably, but the company folded up. I am not sure what the reason is.

So late '71 and early '72 I was unemployed. 1972, my wife was expecting, so I was really looking for a job. I went looking in just about every area I could. Working at the airport didn't really give me any experience other than being able to work at the airport. And I had applied at all the companies, I was unsuccessful in getting any employment. Those years were fairly bad years, in terms of like, airlines making profits. They weren't actually like picking up people, they would hire folks during the summer, but that's about it. In terms of hiring folks on a regular basis, they would never do that. I felt like, based on the kind of experience that I had, I should have been hired by one of those companies. So I started going around to all the places I went to, all the programs: I went to Edward Pratt Center, Employment Security and whatever. I wasn't able to get any satisfaction about either finding a new job or figuring out what to do about my old job.

Somehow I came across one guy at the Edward Pratt Center and wanted me to go over to the United Construction Workers [Association] for some kind of program, I don't even remember what it was. But anyway, I got up there, it was sometime in late November or early December of '71, and the first person I talked to was Todd Hawkins. And I can't remember specifics of it, but like the whole incidence stuck me as, wow, these guys are really right on. I wanted to work on it, not only seeking some new employment, but also trying to figure out what happened to my old job. That's what attracted me there.

I probably would've gone away and disappeared if they'd had a job for me at the time. I would've took the job and ran and become another statistic. But there wasn't any jobs for me. Todd took some time to explain to me that the quotas were there for Blacks going into the trades, what effects that had on Chinese and other ethnic minorities. And it made sense to me, it made sense to me that labor would try to divide us. For some reason, like maybe it was just the whole thing, I needed a job. I kept hanging out with the organization, and I hung out constantly through the summer of '72. I attended UCWA meetings and stuff, and I got to know just about everybody who worked in the office, simply because I was hounding them so much about getting me some work. Finally they did get me a job working outside of the construction industry in a shop, and I went there, in a

warehouse. And I had been there for about a month, and then it came to June '72. Did Tyree tell you about the June 1st movement?

[00:06:35] **WILLIAM:** No.

[00:06:35] **MICHAEL:** That's what we called it . We called it the June 1st Movement. It started in June of '72. Pretty much it was like contractors not complying with terms to meet the decree. People were up in arms, kind of the general work they could do at this point. I think I saw it at that point as an opportunity to change the word from Blacks back to minorities. There had been some discussions of that at UCWA meetings, that we should try to like redo the court order, and I saw that as a possible way for me to get a job again. I had participated in all the meetings so that I knew that something was going to come down on June 1st. I was like just a regular member at that point.

Come June 1st, I was working, but I had decided that I would skip work and go to the demonstration. Well, we ended going across the [I-] bridge, the bridge was open. Tyree was out looking at the bridge, and went up and closed the whole highway down. That was the beginning of all the demonstrations of 1972. They went on for a period of eight or nine days.

Some went on June 8 or something at Seattle Community College, that was pretty much where the stuff ended up at. There was a big confrontation that day, I had taken off from my job again at lunch hour so I could go up for the rally. The crowd was like four or five hundred people there. People proceeded to go to the college, but the tactical squad was already there at the construction site, so it was decided by someone that we would enter the old field and trash it. So I participated in all of that and came out on the other side, and there was a little scuffle, and I was one of the folks to be arrested. And I went back.

At that point, I fell in knee deep into a project. I was in and I couldn't get out. Sitting in the jail gave me time to contemplate what had happened. I probably didn't have a good analysis for it at that point, but I did understand that—it was explained to us at the UCWA meetings, that a court order can work, that that was the avenue for us to approach. We went ahead and pursued that. There was no enforcement of it, so we went ahead and tried to do that on our own, and that brought us up to the police tactical squad. At that point, probably the first contradiction to me, about who the courts were, in whose interest the police operated.

After that whole thing, I mean, I got some more work from UCWA because I lost my job. I was able to get some labor type work, and they helped me out through the summer. Tyree had mentioned to me during that period, like he wanted to know whether I was interested in becoming one of the board members, and I told him I was. I really felt very comfortable with the organization, people I was working with and how they approached things, the structures, and the industry, because they would try to exhaust every avenue prior going out there. It made sense and justified being out there in the streets, and I had never been there before. And that consequently [inaudible] Milton Jefferson, who was also one of the staff persons at the time, left UCWA, and there was an opportunity to fill it. Based on the conversations we were having about broadening the scope of UCWA from a Black organization to a Third World organization, I guess that was the rationale for me going on it. So I've been working here since like October '72. So what's that, three years now? Just about three years.

The kind of work that I did when I first got here was pretty much like becoming familiar with the operations of the office. I worked closely with Todd [Hawkins]. And most of the work at that time, the work of the office, was in terms of the court order, because the result of those demonstrations during that summer caused UCWA to be added to that lawsuit, given a formal role. So much of the work from that point on dealt with the servicing of the terms and how UCWA's role related to the order, and I did job development. You just mentioned how it was service-oriented stuff, that's true, we saw it as like an inroad for attracting people to the organization. During

good periods, during the summer months, we might be able to turn out three, four jobs a week, and during the winter months, we'd be lucky to get three, four a month. So we made change steady, kind of like roles. That was my role, doing the job development. Todd would also do that on the fringes, and other people in the office at that point were like Tyree and [?Kurt?].

Tyree would spend a lot of his time talking to the apprentices and stuff, talking to the guys that came into our office, and he was very active in other things with the court order, the Court Order Advisory Committee and stuff like that. What I remember, I don't remember him doing too much of the job development stuff. And him and Harley [Bird] would have long conversations about legal aspects of the case, and Harley was always like the man for detail, as I saw it. So I knew at that point, I wasn't unclear about what my responsibilities were, I was fairly comfortable with doing the job development. So I had the opportunity to see other people, and it gave me the opportunity for the men to learn about me, too.

I locked in job development for about a year, and in the spring of 1973, this was probably like six, seven months after I started, our money had always been shaky. And one of the things that we were able to do, we probably looked back on it right as it happened and saw it as being a very opportunistic kind of thing, but EEOC [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission] offered to give us some money to do the organizing work in the Southwest [United States]. And not understanding what effect that would have on UCWA back home, we decided that was a good thing to do, based on it would give us some income, and folks were anxious to do that type of work down there, somewhat anxious, anyway.

[00:14:08] **WILLIAM:** Who's EEOC?

[00:14:10] **MICHAEL:** Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. EEOC. So we had for the first time in our life like a federal contract, we were receiving federal money to do that kind of work. And we thought that beyond just going down there and using Title VII, we could go down there and develop workers organizations in the process, similar to like United Construction Workers except not being just the construction industry.

At the same time, I was sent to Alaska. I had been interested in doing something beyond getting Blacks into the construction industry, and we were looking for—actually, what specifically was I talking about? I had worked in Alaska before as a cannery worker, and I had been really familiar with what the problems were, and many of my peer group were former or present cannery workers. So I decided that—the board collectively decided from what I recommended that I go ahead and do that, I go ahead and investigate what the conditions were and hopefully be able to like develop another kind of organization within the cannery industry along the lines of Title VII and stuff. And me and another guy named [Silme] Domingo went to Alaska, and we toured five or six canneries. We were posing it as business management graduate students also doing some stuff in the [?line of area?] fishing. So we were able to get access to all these canneries, some of whom were like open in the [?cities?], others who were isolated on an island. The only visitors they had there were the workers. So it was somewhat tricky getting onto the places, but we got on and did our investigations, took pictures, talked to workers, and came home and followed it up by contacting them as they all returned home. Most of the people who work in Alaska come from the West Coast, or they enter through Seattle.

Consequently, like, the organization got developed as the Alaska Cannery Workers Association. And that was pretty much my main responsibility, probably from the beginning of that summer of '73 to the following year. I worked with them really closely getting the office set up and that kind of stuff. We wanted to make sure, because we had some failures in Denver and in Oakland in trying to set up another organization, that we wouldn't make those same mistakes, not only in Alaska but in the Southwest, as well. Consequently, we set up an organization that would be using the same basis we use: the law as an organizing tool. So we explained to

them how Title VII worked, and that became the thrift of their work, as well. The organization was started in October of '73. They filed their first Title VII lawsuit November 7th or something like that, 1973. And I worked real closely with the organization, staffing it and—

[00:17:51] **WILLIAM:** November what?

[00:17:53] **MICHAEL:** '73. My function was to make sure they stayed above ground, floating. So I worked with them in like locating staff persons, helping do some funding, working with the organizers around locating plaintiffs for Title VII lawsuits, talking to them about the potential of an independent workers organization. Pretty much the same kind of record we would give to folks interested in the construction industry, just dealing with a totally separate industry. I left that after like early '74, I laid all that down, they had hired some staff on their own, they had a functioning board, they had a little bit of their own money, and they had some lawsuits to operate from. And most of the people who actually got organized ended up being Filipino because that was the largest ethnic group in the workforce in Alaska. So the organizers tended to be Filipino as well, they were the people who were hired as staff. They tended to have a better relationship with them working than, say I did, anyway. So my role with them became like an external role.

From that organization, I went back to the UCWA work. Todd and Tyree had just returned from the South, and aside from having the responsibilities of the cannery workers during that period, it was me and Harley Bird and [?Maria?] back here running the office. And we can go back and reflect upon what that was and see the effect of three people... [audio cuts]

...1974? Yeah, so I mean, I was still doing pretty much—me and Harley ended up chairing the program work in Seattle, and a lot of that was based on like folks being removed from the city, meant that we had to cut back on like what we were actually doing. So a lot of the onsite visits to jobs ceased. The kind of like routine daily contact that we had with Black workers in the industry stopped. We kind of withdrew into the office, and that was pretty much like how we functioned. Harley still, because his responsibility still was basically in making policy decisions with regard to how the court order ran, his function didn't change that much. I kind of picked up on a lot of counseling and interview and talking to apprentices. And the job development part fell basically into my lap, and we did that on kind of like a half-staff basis.

But when everyone, Todd and Tyree came back in '74, we had all gone to Texas and back for a conference in 1973, the whole office was closed down, and we all rode back together from Brownsville, Texas. We had rode back coming through San Francisco, and we had spent quite a bit of time with each other talking about what our task was gonna be when we got home. And it was concluded that they had developed the Southwest Workers Federation to a point where their time down there could be limited. At that point, cannery workers were functioning, around the time that I had just spent with them, could be [?moved?]. Now we've decided that based on the last year, that our experience has had an adverse effect on what happened with the UCWA back home, so we decided to come home and do the work.

Since early '74, we've been trying to figure out how to put the organization back together. We've seen the kind of quantitative—like, how it's decreased in numbers, in terms of the organization since 1972 when we could muster out four or five hundred people. So we decided that we'd look on to new kinds of methods and structuring the organization, how we related to new people coming into the office, and a whole bunch of other things like how we would counsel, what our position would be on people who were fucking up, how we would deal with people who were progressing really well.

And we began to be introduced to ourselves, I did anyway, to a whole new degree of politics. All that time we spent looking in the mirror, we could see the limits of the law. That became like the major contradiction for me

in organizing the Cannery Workers Association, that they wanted some immediate kind of relief, and using Title VII lawsuits provides for like a slow, drawn out method of doing the work, and it doesn't provide a good tool for organizing. It only worked in the UCWA's case because of the demonstrations involved around how they forced the Justice Department to come out here, how they did the whole lawsuit from the day of filing it to the day the court issued an order for a period of like seven months.

Since 1973, November of '73 when the cannery lawsuit got filed, that case has yet to go to court, it's still in the discovery stage. So it's had like a deterrent effect on keeping people active in that organization. Maybe in the long run, it's been better, because the people [inaudible] who founded the cannery workers have become like a core group. You know, the folks who are looking beyond monetary relief that a court order won't even give. So it taught me some lessons about shortcomings of the law.

Also, all the time we spent in trying to make the terms of those court orders work in itself showed that there was like little or no enforcement. And that's pretty much the attitude we've been able to project and get Black construction workers to be able to recognize. Even as recently as yesterday, I talked about who's supposed to be doing this law, who's got the responsibility to do it, and ain't nobody responsible, you know? So folks who might've had some faith in how the law operates, folks who might've had some faith in the Civil Rights Act of '64 as a savior are experiencing the contradictions now in the amount of work that they have and what happens to them on the job, what kind of representation they get by their union.

Just based on the fact that we've experienced all that and have tried to stay somewhat ahead of our own membership, we've begun to look to what the next logical progression point in terms of like where do we do our work at. We've virtually exhausted using the law. All we can continue to do is use the law as we best know how to do it, that's the major part of our work today. We can bring a title VII lawsuit in a matter of weeks, based on the attorneys having that kind of experience as well as us understanding of how the Title VII itself works.

But now, we're looking towards the unions themselves, seeing how we can make some wide-ranging kinds of changes in the industry, and we have won the support of the rank-and-file members, white counterparts in the union. And basically, we weren't able to do that based on the court order itself, they saw it solely as an order geared towards bring Blacks into the industry. And the whole racism that exists, they saw the Blacks as a threat to their jobs, which immediately placed a barrier for them in terms of like wanting to cooperate with [the UCWA], so we've had to try to counteract all that stuff in the last year. We've tried to take positions that we're never opposed to white workers, tried to take the position that it would be advantageous to both sides.

The best example of that is probably the stuff that took place back in February of this year, down around the National Construction site job. Did Tyree go there with you all? Are we getting anywhere?

[00:27:09] **WILLIAM:** Yeah, go ahead. We haven't gotten this far yet, but that's fine.

[00:27:16] **MICHAEL:** Well, basically, like standing around a new whole approach we were trying to do like organize into organizations, we broke down the organization along craft lines, stretching them into like various committees. This is something I had learned back East for a couple weeks to a seminar. So, the organization was broken down along craft lines, and our members in each one of those crafts was formed into committees, and the committees would ultimately try to like develop positions and make decisions with regard to what happens in each one of those trades.

As a result of that, the Operating Engineers Committee got developed, and since the whole history of the organization was the Operating Engineers was the one who didn't choose to go to court during 1970. Their attorney had enough foresight to see that they were going to lose, that the attorney's fees were going to be too

expensive. When they entered into a consent decree rather than going to court, this was way in 1970, the terms of the decree were something that we were never satisfied with, because UCWA was not even a part of the order at that point, it was not necessary for the government to consult with us on whether the terms were satisfactory or not. So they entered into an agreement that had virtually little or no effect on the industry, developed a Black oiler trainee category, or category for oiler trainees for minorities. That was one good point about it, was that it wasn't restricted to Blacks, because they didn't progress that far. They allowed the order to read "minorities," and it was kind of a consent thing that had no effect. Guys went into the trade as helpers, they still didn't operate equipment and only worked for five hundred hours, and that was the end of it. They were counted as a statistic, and even at that, most folks didn't get their five hundred hours.

So there was a lot of problems with the operating engineers trades. And while setting up them committees, some guys began to fluster, trying to figure out what to do, especially people who had hung onto UCWA over the years. They had been a part of the organization that was working in the mother four crafts, somewhat successful. And the operating engineers had stopped working five hundred hours ago, so they were ready to do something. And we had, in the course of doing our job development, we had identified the National Construction site as a contractor out of compliance—not actually out of compliance, but just working right in our community, and not having no requirement to have any requirements. So we decided that the committee themselves would place that requirement right on the contractor. They tried to talk with him, meet him in his office, phone calls, letters with no response. So our natural reaction was to shut his job down, and that's what took place, back in November of '74.

And ever since that time, I mean, following that, there was a whole series of demonstrations through February, because the operating engineers union did see the shortcomings of the existing consent decree, and they wanted to seek some new negotiations to try to modify it. And we were all for that, it saves us from going through a whole long, drawn out a lawsuit again. If we can modify the terms of the order, it would be a quick and easy victory for this committee. And the committee itself was instrumental in drawing up each one of the points that they wanted to negotiate into the new consent decree. We worked closely with them to make sure that they understood what had to be stricken with the old consent decree, how it related to their work experience and lack of. And then they decided on eight points, so they went ahead, and all the points were agreed to in principle and written out, they renewed. Beyond that, they went ahead and violated one of our agreed points and hired a white coordinator. Well, that just erupted into a whole new situation.

Consequently, what happened was like folks went to jail all during the demonstrations, not so much that folks were upset about the arrests, but at that point in time, we weren't ready to go underground, so to speak, so we had to face up to the trials. Our whole experience in 1972 was that people got arrested at Seattle Community College, showed that mass arrests took all the steam out of the work. People were more concerned with how they were going to approach their individual trials, so that they could beat their rap, and that took out all the steam out of going out and doing something else. And we had in fact tried to like turn around and fight the courts at that time, and we were going to have the best kind of representation, you know, get attorneys to work on and have cases and witnesses, and all that consumed a lot of time.

So learning that lesson, going into the stuff earlier this year when we had to go to trial, we didn't want to make the same mistake again. We didn't want the committee to forget about those eight points we wanted them to continue working on, but it still didn't negate the fact that people had to go to trial, so we tried to figure out a new kind of strategy, something else that would work. And the position we took was based on our lesson, was that we shouldn't have been on trial. It was the employer who was violating the law. The police again came down and was working in the best interest of the employer rather than us who were unemployed. And I had learned that lesson way back in '72. So I said, "Yeah, shit, right on, I deserve to be out here. This is where I

need to be.” So consequently, we was all arrested again. But this time, instead of trying to figure out a good defense, what we did was said, “We’ve got no defense, we shouldn’t even be here.” And we took the offensive position, making them plea guilty or innocent, and there was a big discussion around that. We got the opportunity to talk to folks who were going on trial and what kind of position they would take. We decided it would be a good idea to do things uniformly. Everybody decided to not recognize the courts, and we showed that we had some strength amongst ourselves.

What else did we do? That was pretty much it. The committee consequently died out, because we got caught up in the court struggle again. During the process of all that happening, labor management went ahead and negotiated the agreement anyway.

[00:35:05] **WILLIAM:** Negotiated with who?

[00:35:06] **MICHAEL:** With the federal government. They entered into a new consent decree, which wasn't new at all, all it did was add an apprenticeship program, and UCWA was still left out of it. We wanted to be left out based on we didn't agree with any of those terms. We didn't want to be bound, with our hands tied. We thought that it had the potential for being a successful approach in like building the organization along committee lines, dividing enough staff time, in-house resources, whatever, to develop each one of these committees. And we had even started to take on, outside of the construction industry, other committees, like the Metro transit drivers, a group from Pacific [?Compounds?], we had all the committees functioning. There was a carpenters committee that was outside the court order, so the kind of work we were able to do with it successfully was limited. So we had this nice organizational chart with no organization, that was basically what we ended up with. We saw the shortcomings of doing that, and we learned we were really going to have to be patient in developing these committees. We still see that as related to our focus on the unions. If we can develop strong committees, they can eventually become part of a—

[Unidentified individual interrupts]

Hopefully they can become some rank-and-file caucus along the way. That's pretty much like what happened, like my relationship to the effect of my working here with regard to the Asian community is something that I'm still trying to understand. Prior to my coming to UCWA, like the only kind of role that I had with the community at all is that my father was fairly prominent amongst Chinese in Chinatown and Beacon Hill. I was never like Chinese speaking, that part of my culture was just ripped off. So I never could like function, not as like a young adult, in Chinatown, because I wasn't able to communicate with nobody. As a child, folks would just recognize me and say, “That's Frank's son,” and I would get to play with them. So never had I had any role in community. It was only when I first came to UCWA that I began to realize that similar problems existed in the Asian community, and I concentrated most of my work on the job development stuff, until I said, “Well, I'm gonna have no effect on the Asian community.” I mean, my first attempt at even doing anything at that point was like the Cannery Workers Association.

But at the same period of time, when I first came to UCWA, a major controversy in the Asian community centered around the [King] Dome stadium. UCWA's position on that stadium at that point was, “Well, it's gonna create more jobs, we need some more jobs in our community.” And I had been talked to by some other people, students and stuff, who were trying to do work in the ID [International District] as well, and they talked to me about like the kind of economic effects it would have on the community, raising taxes, moving people out. You know, I had witnessed the whole thing about how the freeway closed half the community off when they built that on the Eastside and the kind of effect it had on the whole community atmosphere in Chinatown. And like, I was brought up down there, so I could really remember what it was like. It was much like Vancouver's



Chinatown, where folks are familiar with each other, they could buy food on the street all the time. And that's totally disappeared at this time, now I'm grown up enough to look back on what's there no more. And I saw that as being very desirable in terms of organizing people, thinking they have strong communities to work from, and that's good.

So I started to talk to other folks, the people that I did know who were doing the work in the Asian community, and we started to like put together various kinds of ideas that would have a direct effect on people's lives down there. Some stuff around healthcare, that was probably like the most immediate need, and proposals were developed to try to get some money ripped off from some place and get that stuff started.

Well basically, like we had just really been viewed as young radicals, although our actions weren't radical, they were a radical thing in the Asian community at that time. And our age and everything contributed to how we were isolated from established leadership in the International District, and it was the same group that have now become like the political leadership for the community: Ruby Chow, Liem Tuai, not necessarily John Eng because he wasn't a part of the community, but they went on to become part of the bureaucracy. So like, the political differences were clear at that point, not only to us, but for the people that were involved in our own organizations. We were able to point out how through the lack of their actions, like all this stuff you think would be in their best interest as well because they had some relationship to the International District wasn't being moved on, not because they weren't Asian, but because they were tied into this bureaucracy. So we was able to show other people how that stuff didn't work. It went beyond just the people in our organization. At that point, we were able to point out to other folks in the community what that meant.

[00:41:54] **WILLIAM:** What organization?

[00:41:56] **MICHAEL:** Well, it was the Cannery Workers Association at the time. There was another organization down there called [taps table] InterIm. InterIm was like the active organization at the time. And then the young radical group was the International District Youth Council, YDYC. So you know, like those three organizations probably played an active role in raising problems that existed in the International District. And just by like working with them, I became familiar with who the players were. And they also became familiar with me and who we were, the UCWA.

And UCWA fortunately always had a board that was open-minded with regards to like doing work in other communities, so I was never restricted from doing work down there. In fact, our whole policy dictated that we should be supportive of everyone down there. And that was transmitted through like all of our work, and people began to trust us more, and they knew that we had a relationship with the cannery workers. They still see me as UCWA, most folks in the International District don't know what UCWA is, the regular people. The active people down there do know. But because they see me around the community, they see me more as like somebody who's down there raising their mission.

And it still sets you over here, as part of like a younger radical group. But folks have begun to be more comfortable with us, just like the Black apprentices were more comfortable with me when I was doing the job development because they began to see us more regularly. And it really began to be like a whole process of learning what the forces in the Asian community were at that point, and it taught me a lot of things about like how to go about making those distinctions clear, not just to myself but to other folks in the community, distinctions along political lines, whose interests are you working for, those kinds of things.

We took some positions with regard to housing in the International District that were fairly clear. Everyone who lived down there understood the poor conditions that exist and the need for better and additional housing, but we couldn't get people in the bureaucracy to say that, and their rhetoric became offensive to regular people

down there. So we were able to exploit that kind of stuff and say, "Here's what it meant, they're never gonna work in your interest." And that struggle is still ongoing, there's some stuff around that tonight that we want to try to participate in, but our work is basically back here. It hasn't changed any of the stuff my last year and a half working in the International District since I left the cannery workers, hasn't been anything to change my working relationship with the people down here, I'm still not Chinese speaking, although I'm going to school now to learn how to speak Chinese.

Because I've been identified with that side of the community, there will be times when folks call upon me to like talk or something, and I'll just explain to them how that's pretty much like not how we function in the community, we're not trying to do that, go out and give talks about it, but we will speak up at a meeting or something. I don't know how to say that.

[00:45:54] **WILLIAM:** There's a difference there.

[00:45:58] **MICHAEL:** So from a practical point of view, it hasn't changed anything: the time I spent in the Asian community, or the time I spent with United Construction Workers, in terms of like how I get viewed by regular working people down there. Nobody's too familiar with anybody down there, it's not like in the Black community, where folks readily identify with Harley or Todd or Tyree or with UCWA. Most folks in the Black community don't know that I worked here, and that's pretty much true in the Asian community, as well. They know Tyree by name and those types of things, but they didn't know that I even worked here because most of my relationship with them has been sending around stuff relating to the International District, so that's how they become familiar with me. And even if they did know I worked here, it wouldn't make that kind of difference, not based on the work that I'm still doing in the International District, and it's really limited at this point. Some people down there are really racist, they might see us as a Black organization, but they tend to be few, and that's not the most common attitude about it.

Some of the problems that I saw with the organizational work that was going on was pretty much the result of everybody being away from the office, that was probably the first time that I recognized that we were doing stuff wrong. And during our ride back from Texas, coming back from the conference, we talked about it in great length, and I got a chance to talk about how I saw the office being deteriorated behind our absence, and I felt really good that other people would agree with me. Tyree would agree with that and want to commit his time to make Seattle work. I think that was like the basis for a better kind of working relationship, since we had never worked together before, aside from being in the same office. And we all decided that our commitment, our time was gonna be spent back at home. So I think it strengthened the kind of personal relationships we had. That's been a real key part, keeping the office together at this point.